

ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION No. 39

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman DANIEL R. BENSON

District 14 (Mercer and Middlesex)

SYNOPSIS

Respectfully urges Congress to pass legislation awarding Congressional Gold Medal to “Merrill’s Marauders.”

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



AR39 BENSON

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1 **AN ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION** respectfully urging Congress to pass
2 legislation awarding the Congressional Gold Medal to World War
3 II “Merrill’s Marauders.”
4
5 **WHEREAS**, In August 1943, during World War II, President Franklin D.
6 Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill proposed
7 the creation of an American ground unit that would engage in a
8 “long-range penetration mission” in Japanese-occupied Burma to cut
9 off communications and supply lines and capture northern Burma’s
10 only strategic, all-weather Myitkyina airfield; and
11 **WHEREAS**, President Roosevelt’s 1943 call for volunteers for this
12 “dangerous and hazardous mission” was answered by approximately
13 3,000 American infantrymen from the United States mainland,
14 Caribbean, and South Pacific, representing fifteen ethnic groups; and
15 **WHEREAS**, The top-secret commando unit was officially designated as
16 the “5307th Composite Unit (Provisional),” code named “Galahad,”
17 and later became known as “Merrill’s Marauders” after the unit’s
18 leader, Brigadier General Frank D. Merrill; and
19 **WHEREAS**, In February 1944, “Merrill’s Marauders” began their
20 approximate 1,000-mile march through the dense Burma jungle and
21 up the outlying ranges of the Himalayan Mountains with no artillery
22 support and bringing only the supplies they could pack on their backs
23 or mules; and
24 **WHEREAS**, The Marauders endured starvation, disease, monsoons, and
25 isolation, which were exacerbated by inadequate aerial resupply
26 drops, the treacherous journey, and continuous skirmishes and battles
27 with enemy troops; and
28 **WHEREAS**, Despite being vastly outnumbered and poorly supplied,
29 “Merrill’s Marauders” victoriously defeated the much larger, elite
30 Japanese 18th Division in five major battles and 30 minor
31 engagements; and
32 **WHEREAS**, After successfully seizing northern Burma’s only all-
33 weather Myitkyina airfield, only about 130 out of the approximate
34 3,000 original members remained fit for combat, the others having
35 been wounded, incapacitated by diseases, or killed in action; and
36 **WHEREAS**, For their bravery and accomplishments, each member of
37 “Merrill’s Marauders” was awarded a Bronze Star and the unit
38 received the “Distinguished Unit Citation,” later re-designated as the
39 “Presidential Unit Citation”; and
40 **WHEREAS**, The legacy of “Merrill’s Marauders” is honored by the
41 United States Army’s 75th Ranger Regiment, which traces its lineage
42 directly to the unit, which successfully freed Burma’s airspace so
43 supplies could be flown in to forge a critical Allied Forces pathway
44 into China; and
45 **WHEREAS**, In 2019, during the 75th anniversary of “Merrill’s
46 Marauders” successful mission in Burma, United States
47 Representative Peter T. King of New York introduced H.R.906 and
48 United States Senator Johnny Isakson of Georgia introduced S.743,

1 both titled the “Merrill’s Marauders Congressional Gold Medal Act,”
2 to honor the unit; and

3 **WHEREAS**, It is altogether fitting and proper for the State of New Jersey
4 to respectfully urge the United States Congress to pass
5 H.R.906/S.743, the “Merrill’s Marauders Congressional Gold Medal
6 Act,” to recognize and honor the extraordinary service, bravery, and
7 sacrifice of the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional) during World
8 War II; now, therefore,

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10 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the General Assembly of the State of New
11 Jersey:

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13 1. This House respectfully urges the United States Congress to
14 pass legislation, currently pending before the United States House of
15 Representatives as H.R.906 and the United States Senate as S.743,
16 which awards the Congressional Gold Medal to the 5307th
17 Composite Unit (Provisional), commonly known as “Merrill’s
18 Marauders,” for their extraordinary service, bravery, and sacrifice
19 during their 1944 campaign in the China-Burma-India Theater,
20 known today as the “forgotten theater of World War II.”

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22 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,
23 shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly to the
24 Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the Majority
25 and Minority leaders of the United States House of Representatives,
26 and each member of the United States House of Representatives
27 elected from this State.

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30 STATEMENT

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32 This resolution urges the United States Congress to pass the
33 “Merrill’s Marauders Congressional Gold Medal Act,” currently
34 pending before the House of Representatives as H.R.906 and the
35 United States Senate as S.743. H.R.906/S.743 acknowledges the
36 contributions and sacrifices made by the 5307th Composite Unit
37 (Provisional), commonly known as “Merrill’s Marauders,” during
38 their successful 1944 Burma campaign under almost “impossible”
39 conditions in the China-Burma-India Theater by awarding a
40 Congressional Gold Medal to the unit. This congressional
41 recognition of the unit is fitting and proper as “Merrill’s Marauders”
42 disruption of enemy supply and communication lines enabled them
43 to seize northern Burma’s Myitkyina airfield, which freed airspace
44 so supplies could be flown in over the Himalayas to create a critical
45 Allied Forces roadway into China. The year 2019 represents the 75th
46 anniversary of “Merrill’s Marauders” successful Burma mission and
47 ultimate victory in the China-Burma-India Theater.